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DAREDEVIL
THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR!
GHOST OF EVIL'S PAST
DIRECT EDITION
McDANIEL

DAREDEVIL®

THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR!

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VENDETTAS - DAREDEVIL & ELEKTRA ..... PG. 2

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DEAD END - BLACK WIDOW ..... PG. 49

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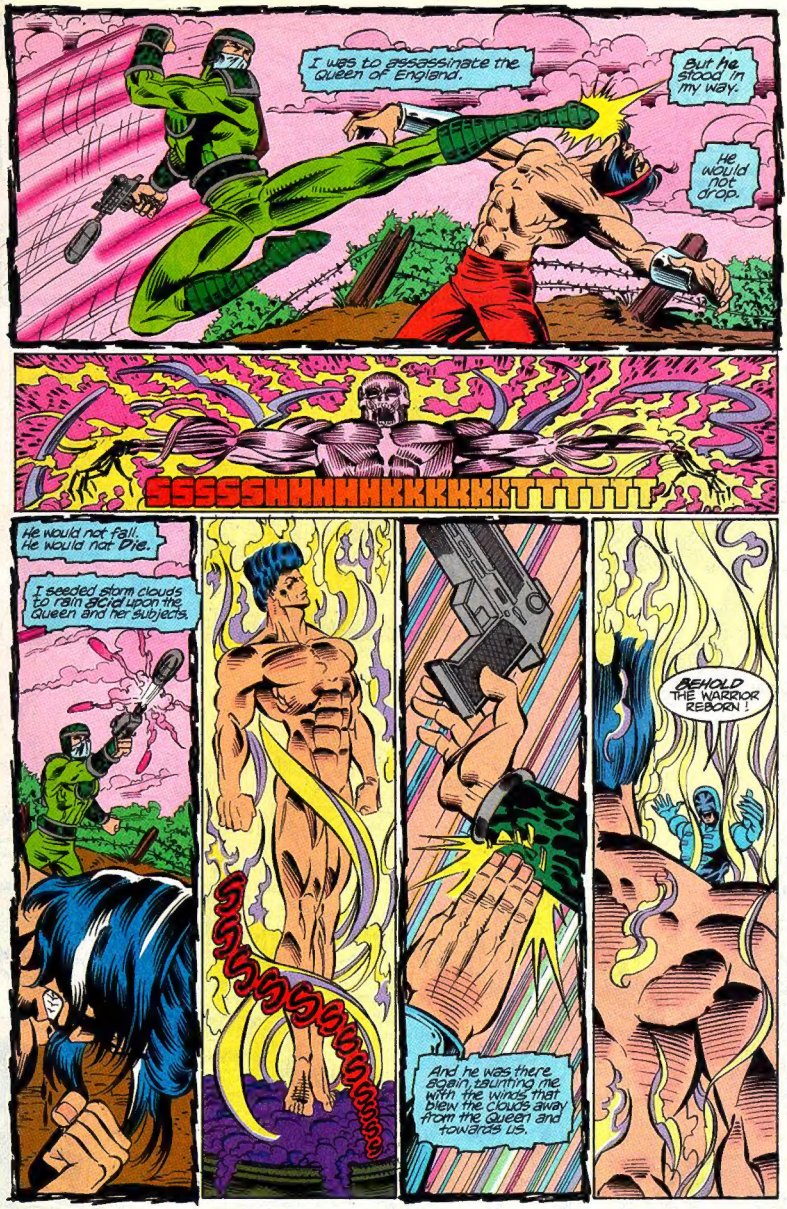
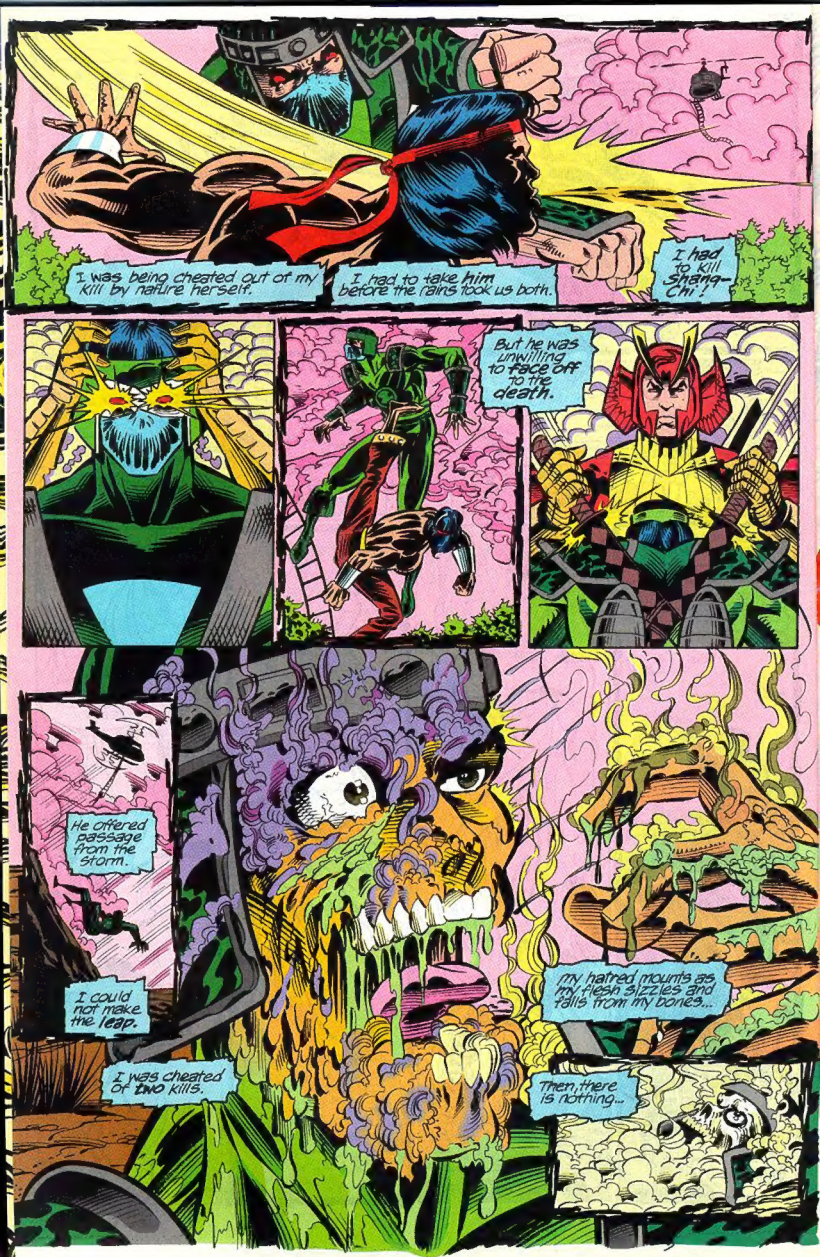
FROM THE ASHEN REMAINS--
--SHALL WE GRANT REBIRTH TO A WARRIOR OF THE HAND--
--TO SERVE THE SNAKEROOT!
FWOOSH
I sense the blackness.
And then I realized that I have not sensed anything since my death.

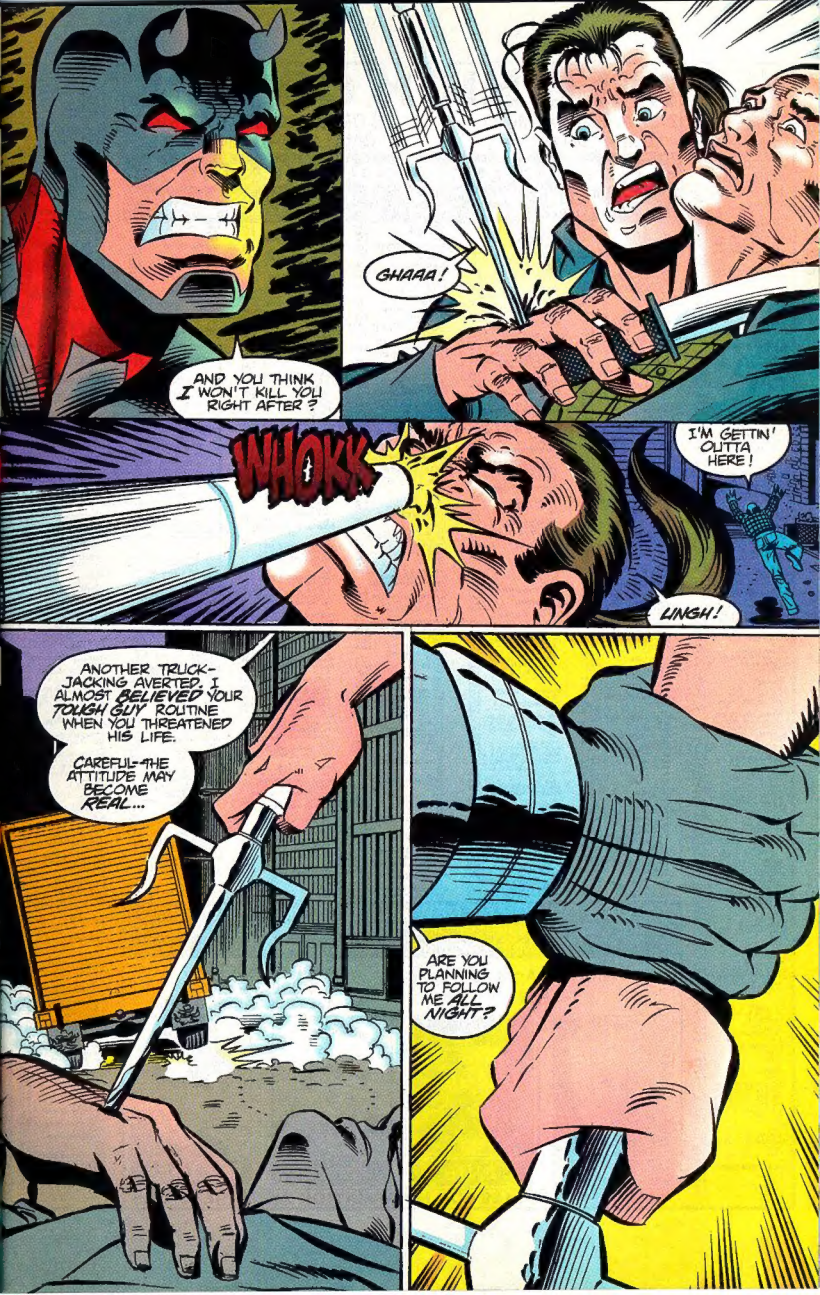

I was to assassinate the Queen of England.
But he stood in my way.
He would not drop.
SSSSSHHHHHKKKKKTTTTTT
He would not fall. He would not Die.
I seeded storm clouds to rain acid upon the Queen and her subjects.
SSSSSSSSSSSS
And he was there again, squinting me with the winds that blew the clouds away from the Queen and towards us.
BEHOLD THE WARRIOR REBORN!


I was being cheated out of my kill by nature herself.
I had to take him before the rains took us both.
I had to kill Shang-Chi!
But he was unwilling to face off to the death.
He offered passage from the storm.
I could not make the leap.
I was cheated of TWO kills.
My hatred mounts as my flesh sizzles and falls from my bones...
Then, there is nothing...

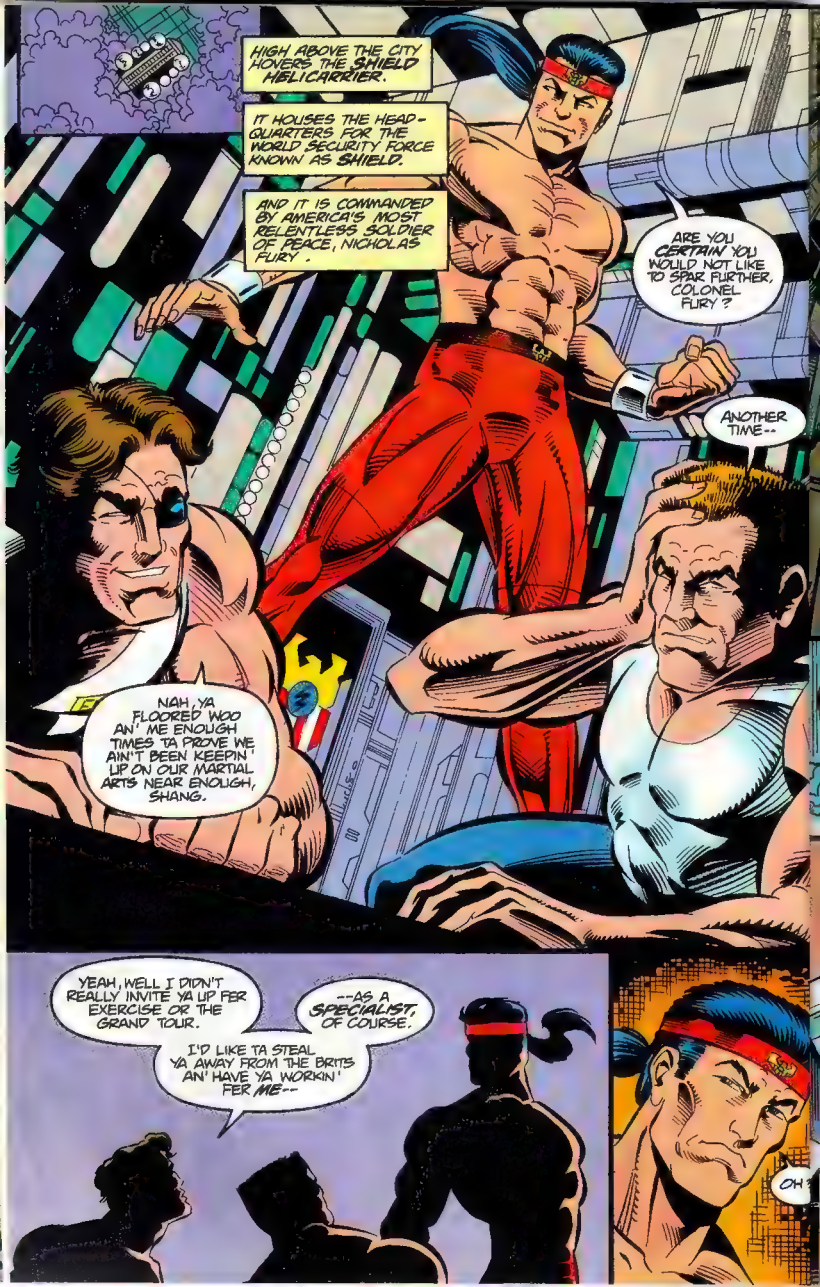
...until now.
YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN A SECOND CHANCE TO PROVE YOUR WORTH TO THE HAND AND IT'S SHAKEROOT, GHOSTMAKER.
YOU WILL TAKE THE LIFE OF THE COSTUMED VIGILANTE KNOWN AS DAREDEVIL, AS WELL AS THAT OF THE ASSASSIN ELEKTRA.
THEY HAVE CAUSED GREAT HARM TO OUR ORDER AND MUST BE PUNISHED BEFORE WE INCUR THE WRATH OF THE BEAST!
second chance...

MIDTOWN MANHATTAN.
A MAN WHO CANNOT SEE LEAPS TOWARD THAT WHICH A SIGHTED MAN WOULD MOST CERTAINLY AVOID.
HE DOES NOT FEAR THE TWO-STORY DROP.
HE DOES NOT FEAR THE SOUNDS OF FOUR AUTOMATIC WEAPONS BEING LOCKED INTO FIRING POSITION.
TOKK
AEIII!
HIS SENSES ALLOW HIM TO FEEL HIS SURROUNDINGS IN A WAY THAT MAKES BEING ABLE TO SEE A LIABILITY.
YOU BOYS ARE SPOILING WHAT WAS A NICE NIGHT.
SNAK

EFFORTLESSLY HE GLIDES OUT OF THE PATHWAYS OF BULLETS HE HEARS WHISTLING THROUGH THE AIR.
BRAKKABRAKKABRAKKA!
LIGHTNING FAST REFLEXES ALLOW HIM TO FIGHT THREE AS EASILY AS ONE.
THESE ARE MY STREETS, AND THE PENALTY FOR CRIMINAL TRESPASSING IS STEEP.
KRAK
KRAKK
KRAK
"THAT'S ENOUGH-- WHOEVER YOU ARE--
YOU EASE BACK OR THE DRIVER GETS A NEW SMILE!


AND YOU THINK I WON'T KILL YOU RIGHT AFTER ?
GHAAA!
WHOKK
I'M GETTIN' OUTTA HERE!
UNGH!
ANOTHER TRUCK-JACKING AVERTED. I ALMOST BELIEVED YOUR TOUGH GUY ROUTINE WHEN YOU THREATENED HIS LIFE.
CAREFUL-THE ATTITUDE MAY BECOME REAL...
ARE YOU PLANNING TO FOLLOW ME ALL NIGHT?

NOT ONCE I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION.
WE MAKE AN EXCELLENT TEAM, MATT--
NO.
MATT MURDOCK IS DEAD, AND I DON'T LOVE YOU, ELEKTRA.
IT ISN'T LIKE... BEFORE.
I'M NOT LIKE BEFORE, EITHER.


HIGH ABOVE THE CITY HOVERS THE SHIELD HELICARRIER.
IT HOUSES THE HEAD-QUARTERS FOR THE WORLD SECURITY FORCE KNOWN AS SHIELD.
AND IT IS COMMANDED BY AMERICA'S MOST RELENTLESS SOLDIER OF PEACE, NICHOLAS FURY.
ARE YOU CERTAIN YOU WOULD NOT LIKE TO SPAR FURTHER, COLONEL FURY?
ANOTHER TIME--
NAH, YA FLOORED WOO AN' ME ENOUGH TIMES TA PROVE WE AIN'T BEEN KEEPIN' UP ON OUR MARTIAL ARTS NEAR ENOUGH, SHANG.
YEAH, WELL I DIDN'T REALLY INVITE YA UP FER EXERCISE OR THE GRAND TOUR.
--AS A SPECIALIST, OF COURSE.
I'D LIKE TA STEAL YA AWAY FROM THE BRITS AN' HAVE YA WORKIN' FER ME--
OH?

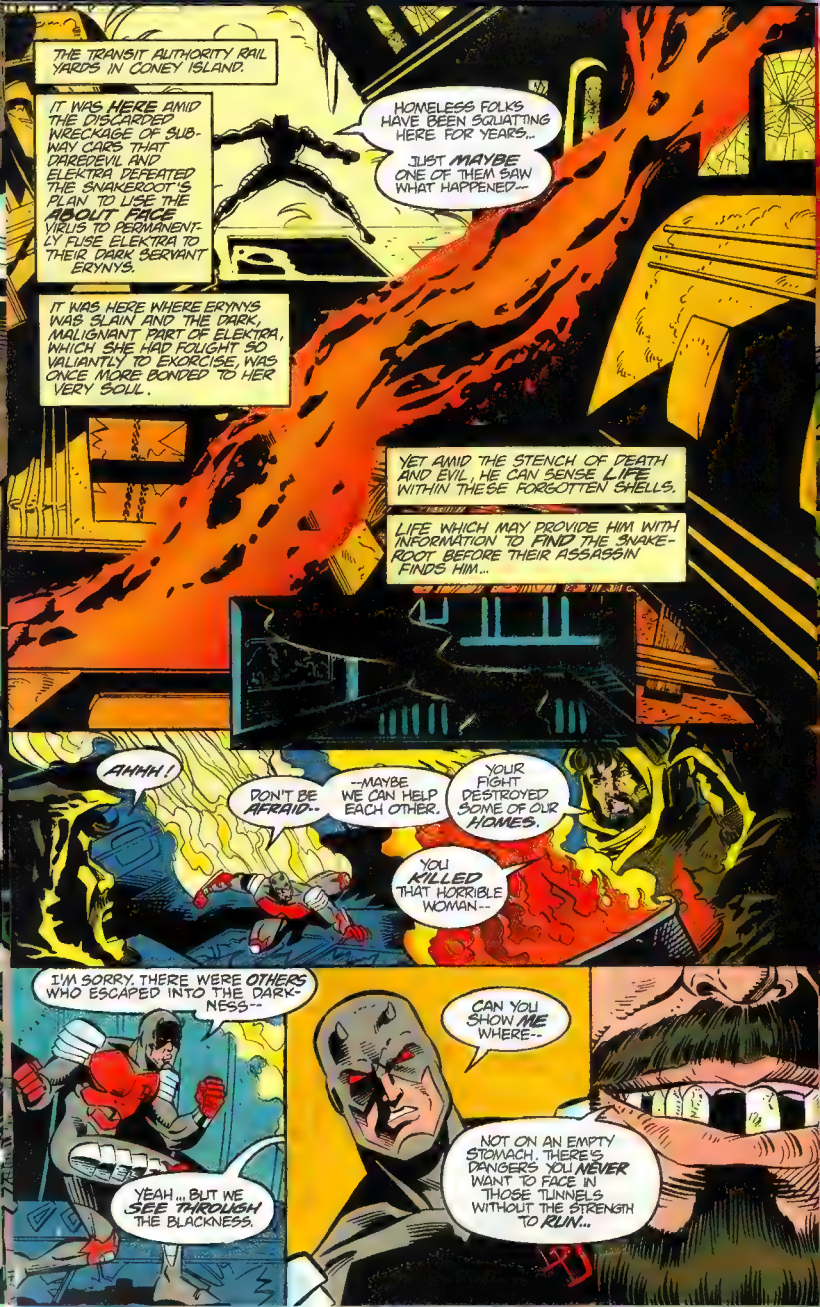
FEW CAN ENJOY THE CITY AS DAREDEVIL CAN.
HE MOVES WITH A FREEDOM KNOWN ONLY TO THE CITY'S THOUSANDS OF BIRDS.
THIS FREEDOM CAUSES JEALOUSY IN SOME.
"WHY CAN'T YOU FEEL FOR ME WHAT YOU FEEL FOR THIS CITY, MATT--"
so easy to find.
so easy.

Too easy.
VIP
I'M IMPRESSED. YOU RECOVER WELL, DAREDEVIL.
I AM GHOSTMAKER. I HAVE HEARD OF YOUR REPUTATION AGAINST MANY RESPECTED OPPONENTS. I HAVE BEEN SENT BY THE SNAKEROOT.
I ANTICIPATE YOUR DEATH TO BE EXTREMELY SATISFYING.
YOU'RE DREAMING, PAL--
AM I?
WHUP

I AM NOT LIKE ANY OTHER YOU HAVE FACED BEFORE, VIGILANTE!
WHOK
LIHNG!
THE STENCH OF THE BEAST MARKS THIS GHOST-MAKER AS A MEMBER OF THE HAND!
COME, DANCE WITH ME!
PROVE YOUR WORTH TO DIE OF MY NAKED KILL!
NOT ON YOUR BEST DAY...
THWOK
A MODIFIED SAI...

YOU SHOULDN'T ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE DISTRACTED IN THE MIDST OF THE FIGHT--
KRAKK
His reflexes nearly rival my own--
THE BEAST MUST DIE!
ELEKTRA!
KRAKK
She comes out of nowhere.
Silent...
full of rage...
full of hate..
The same type of hate I possess for SHANG-CHI...
I am unprepared to battle BOTH targets at once.
I wish to take them individually, to defeat them at my best...
...so their dying thoughts will be of MY superiority.
I WOULD'VE TAKEN HIM DOWN, ELEKTRA! WHY DO YOU HAVE TO INTERFERE IN--
HE HAS THE STENCH OF THE BEAST.
AND NOW HE HAS MY SAI.
YOUR SAI? THAT ONE BELONGED TO ERYNYS WHILE SHE POSSESSED YOUR DARK ESSENCE...

ABOARD THE SHIELD HELICARRIER, NICK FURY CONTINUES HIS PITCH TO SHANG CHI...
...OUT LOOSE, ELEKTRA'S A POWDER-KEG WITH A QUICK BURNIN' FUSE. BUT IF SHE COULD BE BROUGHT IN, HARNESSED FER GOOD--
--SHE'D BE QUITE AN ASSET TA SHIELD.
'COURSE WE NEED SOMEONE WHO WAS AT LEAST HER EQUAL--
LEMME CUT RIGHT TA THE CHASE. SHE'S COMPROMISED MY OPERATION IN THE PAST, AND ACCORDIN' TA INFORMATION WE DUG OUT OF ONE OF OUR CYBORG "OPERATIVES", SHE'S BACK IN BUSINESS, BUT ON OUR SIDE.
I DON'T BELIEVE IT. I WANT HER BROUGHT IN.
I WANT ANSWERS PERSONALLY--
COLONEL FURY?
WE'VE HAD ANOTHER ELEKTRA SIGHTING--
GIVE ME SOMETHIN' BESIDES THE TOURIST VERSION.
SHE WAS FIGHTING A HOSTILE WE'VE IDENTIFIED AS THE LATE SOVIET ASSASSIN, GHOSTMAKER...
HUH. PUT EVERYTHING ON SCREEN.
PERHAPS I WILL ALLOW YOU TO ENLIST MY SERVICE ON A TEMPORARY BASIS.
I CAN BRING ELEKTRA IN FOR YOU..
YA GOTTA LOVE TECHNOLOGY, SHANG. WE GOT SO MUCH SUR-VEILLANCE CRUD HOVERIN' AROUND, IF WE EVER WANTED TA HAVE OUR OWN CABLE CHANNEL WE'D FUND OUR ENTIRE OP IN A WEEK.
THINK IT'S REALLY HIM? BRITISH INTELLIGENCE SAID HE MELTED LIKE THE WICKED WITCH A' THE WEST--
I-- DID NOT WITNESS HIS ACTUAL DEMISE.
WELCOME ABOARD. I THOUGHT YA MIGHT WANNA GO AFTER... ELEKTRA.

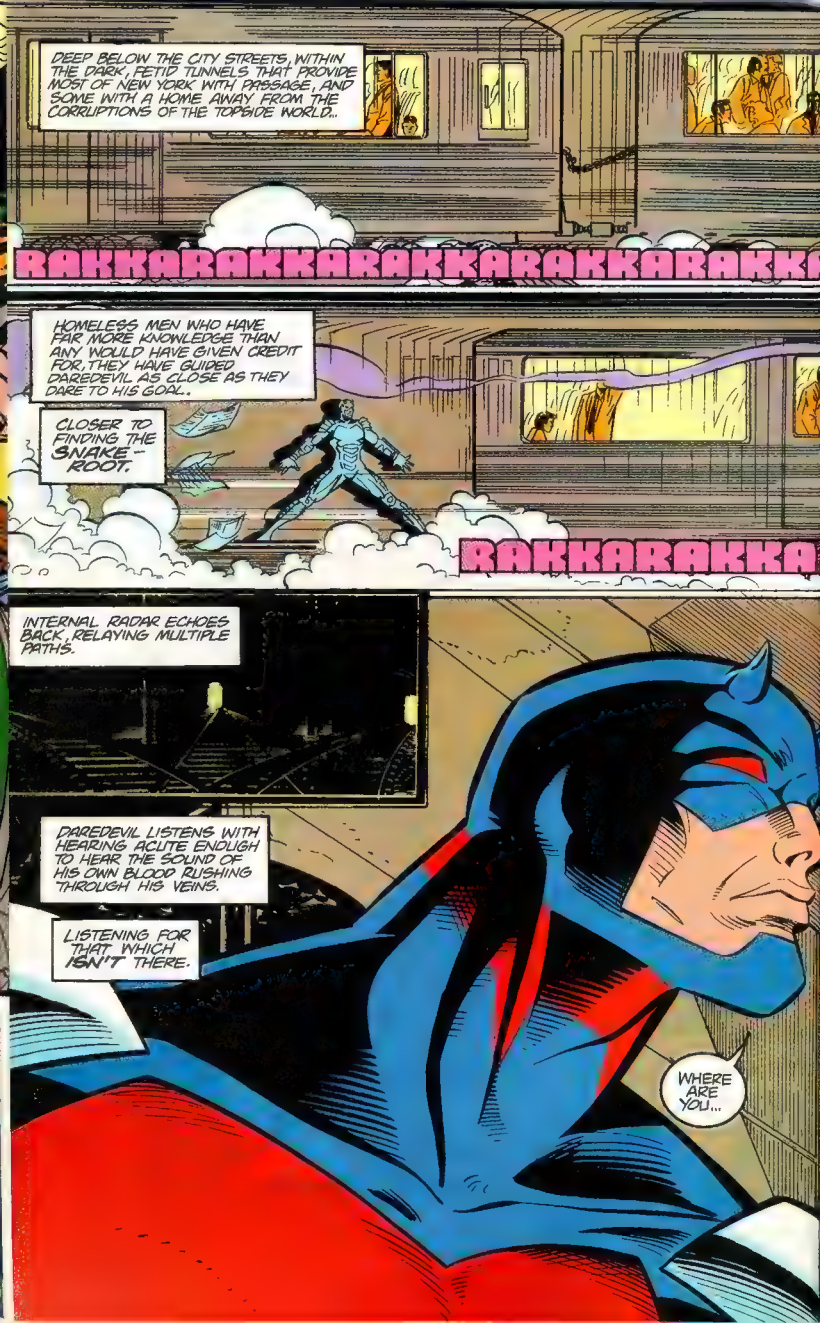

THE TRANSIT AUTHORITY RAIL YARDS IN CONEY ISLAND.
IT WAS HERE AMID THE DISCARDED WRECKAGE OF SUBWAY CARS THAT DAREDEVIL AND ELEKTRA DEFEATED THE SNAKEROOT'S PLAN TO USE THE ABOUT FACE VIRUS TO PERMANENTLY FUSE ELEKTRA TO THEIR DARK SERVANT ERYNYS.
HOMELESS FOLKS HAVE BEEN SQUATTING HERE FOR YEARS...
JUST MAYBE ONE OF THEM SAW WHAT HAPPENED--
IT WAS HERE WHERE ERYNYS WAS SLAIN AND THE DARK, MALIGNANT PART OF ELEKTRA, WHICH SHE HAD FOUGHT SO VALIANTLY TO EXORCISE, WAS ONCE MORE BONDED TO HER VERY SOUL.
YET AMID THE STENCH OF DEATH AND EVIL, HE CAN SENSE LIFE WITHIN THESE FORGOTTEN SHELLS.
LIFE WHICH MAY PROVIDE HIM WITH INFORMATION TO FIND THE SNAKEROOT BEFORE THEIR ASSASSIN FINDS HIM...
AHHH!
DON'T BE AFRAID--
--MAYBE WE CAN HELP EACH OTHER.
YOUR FIGHT DESTROYED SOME OF OUR HOMES.
YOU KILLED THAT HORRIBLE WOMAN--
I'M SORRY. THERE WERE OTHERS WHO ESCAPED INTO THE DARKNESS--
YEAH... BUT WE SEE THROUGH THE BLACKNESS.
CAN YOU SHOW ME WHERE--
NOT ON AN EMPTY STOMACH. THERE'S DANGERS YOU NEVER WANT TO FACE IN THOSE TUNNELS WITHOUT THE STRENGTH TO RUN...

TIMES SQUARE HAS ALWAYS HAD A CERTAIN LURE.
THE LIGHTS GUIDING THE MASSES TO ITS HEART, WITH THE PROMISE OF A NIGHT THEY WON'T SOON FORGET.
LIVE
LIVE
LIVE
WXYZ
SAMSON
FOR ELEKTRA IT PROVIDES A TEMPORARY RESPITE FROM THE FRUSTRATION SHE FEELS... OVER MATT MURDOCK... OVER DAREDEVIL.
HIS LOVE, HIS PURITY CLEANSED HER SOUL ONCE.
NOW HE DENIES HER THE HEART SHE HERSELF SHATTERED, IN WHAT SEEMS TO BE AN ETERNITY AGO.
SHE STRUGGLES AGAINST THE DARK VOICES INSIDE AS SHE SEEKS THOSE WHO WOULD PREY UPON THE FOOLISH AND INNOCENT FREQUENTING THE GREAT WHITE WAY...
...THOSE WHOSE IDEA OF A THRILL IS DRAGGING A YOUNG GIRL INTO AN ALLEY, TREATING HER TO A NIGHTMARE THAT WILL NEVER GO AWAY...
Elektra. She seeks PREY.
She hungers for blood.
If she is HALF of her reputation, she is more than WORTHY.
She must have my FULL attention, and I must have HERS.

HUNDREDS OF FEET ABOVE...
AS MUCH AS I HATE TO ADMIT IT, FURY, YOUR TECHNOLOGY IS QUITE REMARKABLE.
YER FULLY CLOAKED, AND ON AUTO PILOT, SHANG. ALL YA GOTTA DO IS KEEP YER EYES PEELED TA THAT CONSOLE TO YER RIGHT--
OUR SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS ARE RIGGED TA GIVE YA PRECISE LOCATIONS ON ANYONE WE GOT IN OUR DATABASE--
I HAVE PICKED UP ELEKTRA, I AM GOING IN.
I WAS RIGHT. GHOSTMAKER'S NEAR. HE MUST HAVE A CONTRACT ON ELEKTRA.
TEK
I MUST KNOW IF HE IS TRULY GHOSTMAKER, OR AN IMPOSTOR.
IF HE IS FOR REAL, HE IS FAR TOO DANGEROUS TO ROAM FREE...

She has not detected me.
Perhaps this ex-Hand assassin is NOT in my class.
--A RED TUNIC?
I'll take her with her own--
SHANG-CHI!
FINALLY, YOU ARE READY TO FACE ME TO THE DEATH!

No. Not like THIS.
There is no HONOR.
NOW.
ALL SOUND FADES FROM EXISTENCE AS ELEKTRA CATCHES THE FOUL SCENT OF THE BEAST SHE ONCE SERVED EMANATING FROM GHOSTMAKER.
TWIN EAGLE SODA


DEEP BELOW THE CITY STREETS, WITHIN THE DARK, FETID TUNNELS THAT PROVIDE MOST OF NEW YORK WITH PASSAGE, AND SOME WITH A HOME AWAY FROM THE CORRUPTIONS OF THE TOPSIDE WORLD...
RAKKARAKKARAKKARAKKARAKKA
HOMELESS MEN WHO HAVE FAR MORE KNOWLEDGE THAN ANY WOULD HAVE GIVEN CREDIT FOR, THEY HAVE GUIDED DAREDEVIL AS CLOSE AS THEY DARE TO HIS GOAL..
CLOSER TO FINDING THE SNAKE-ROOT.
RAKKARAKKA
INTERNAL RADAR ECHOES BACK, RELAYING MULTIPLE PATHS.
DAREDEVIL LISTENS WITH HEARING ACUTE ENOUGH TO HEAR THE SOUND OF HIS OWN BLOOD RUSHING THROUGH HIS VEINS.
LISTENING FOR THAT WHICH ISN'T THERE.
WHERE ARE YOU...

BACK IN TIMES SQUARE TWO WARRIORS FIGHT A FIERCE BUT SILENT WAR.
ONE FIGHTS FOR HONOR. ONE FOR JUSTICE.
GHUUU!
THOK!
A CHILL PASSES over Shang-Chi and myself as SHE appears.
She stands poised, ready to JOIN us.
Ready to CHEAT me of my right to finish Shang-Chi one on one...
And then she disappears for no reason.

GYAHH!
His concentration is broken a split second longer than my own. It costs him two ribs.
HI YAHH!
KRAK
I have drawn FIRST blood. unbalanced him.
He is MINE!
WOKK
THAP
NO! His rage has given him the ADVANTAGE.
I have underestimated him...
...the time for honor is past.
YOU WILL DIE AT MY HAND, SHANG-CHI, REGARDLESS OF THE MEANS WHICH I MUST USE!

NO!
WHURGH!
THROK
He uses my every attack to HIS advantage. He is more a warrior now than in our first encounter.
He is TRULY my superior... I have never had to admit this of a foe before.
I cannot TAKE him at this time-- not hand-to-hand...
There ARE alternatives...
YOU WILL NOT BE GRANTED THE HONOR OF TAKING MY LIFE, SHANG-CHI--
BLOOM

REEEEEEEOOOOOOOREEEEEEOOO
UHHN...
GYAHHH!
HUHH HUHH HUHH...
WHEN I FIND HER, I WILL ASK HER.
AND I WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU WANTED WITH HER, AS WELL.
SUICIDE OVER DEFEAT?
WHY DID ELEKTRA ONLY WATCH US, GHOSTMAKER?

NEARBY...
A pity my ESCAPE prevented me from standing over Shang-Chi's charred corpse.
Worse yet, I feel no SATISFACTION from --
GHOSTMAKER!
WE HAVE BEEN OBSERVING YOUR PROGRESS. WE HAVE NO BUSINESS WITH SHANG-CHI.
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE ENGAGED HIM.
WE DO NOT NEED HIM AS AN ENEMY.
I TOOK CARE OF HIM.
HARDLY. HE LIVES.
WE GRANTED YOU LIFE, AND WE CAN EASILY TAKE IT BACK IF YOU DO NOT COMPLETE YOUR SANCTION.
I HAVE MY OWN VENDETTA'S AS WELL, LORD DAITO.
I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOUR PROBLEM, DESPITE YOUR THREATS, BECAUSE IT'S MY PLEASURE.
DAREDEVIL IS IN THE TUNNELS NEAR ONE OF OUR BASES.
YOU MUST SEE THAT HE DOES NOT FIND HIS WAY FURTHER...
ABOVE...
MATT...

HE HAS BEEN THROUGH MILES OF TUNNEL.
FOLLOWING FAMILIAR SOUNDS, FAMILIAR SCENTS.
A STRANGE HEARTBEAT AND IRREGULAR BREATHING CAUSE HIM TO STOP.
RADAR LOCATES THE ONLY LIFE NEARBY.
BUT THEIR HEARTBEATS ARE NOTHING LIKE THE ONE HE HEARD.
Strange. This Hero navigates the darkness as if it were broad daylight...

But he is STILL no match for--
YOU'RE GOOD, GHOSTMAKER. BUT NOT GOOD ENOUGH.
WHERE'S THE SNAKEROOT?
Astonishing--
YOU ARE MARKED FOR DEATH--
--YOU DESERVE NO ANSWERS!
I'VE HEARD THAT ONE BEFORE.

IT ALWAYS ENDS THE SAME.
I'M STILL HERE.
WHUDD
SHAKK
ARMOR PLATING...
WHAT ABOUT YOUR HEAD--
I'M NOT GIVING YOU A CHANCE TO FIND OUT.
WHAMM

IN ANOTHER SECTION OF THE TUNNELS...
THAT'S FAR ENOUGH, ELEKTRA. YOUR PRESENCE HAS BEEN REQUESTED BY SHIELD.
I HAVE RESPECTED YOUR ABILITIES FOR YEARS, SHANG-CHI. BUT YOU ARE IN NO CONDITION TO TAKE ME.
WHAT CONNECTION DO THE TWO OF YOU HAVE ?
HE CARRIES THE STENCH OF THE BEAST.
WHY DIDN'T YOU TAKE HIM WHILE I--
IT WAS NOT MY FIGHT. IT WAS BETWEEN THE TWO OF YOU.
WHEN HONOR IS AT STAKE, VENGEANCE MUST SOMETIMES BE DELAYED.
GHOSTMAKER ELUDED ME IN THE TUNNELS.
CAN YOU PICK UP GHOST-MAKER'S TRAIL AGAIN ?
HE IS ATTEMPTING TO ASSASSINATE THE ONLY MAN TO EVER TRULY CARE FOR ME. TO TAKE ME IN, YOU HAD BETTER BE AS WILLING TO LOSE YOUR LIFE AS I AM MINE.

This DAREDEVIL is far more deadly than I would have believed.
Him, I will NOT underestimate.
KLK
SNXXXX
THAKK
YOU LIVE FOR DEATH--
THOKK
--ALL THAT BAD KARMA'S GOING TO COST YOU!
WHOKK

I HAVE ALREADY PAID THOSE COSTS.
DON'T LOOK SO SHOCKED.
SKKRZZZT
GYAHHHH!
AS YOU SEE, MY WEAPONS ARE MORE THAN THEY SEEM.
KRAK

ENJOY THOSE LAST SECONDS OF LIFE, WHILE I CRUSH YOUR WINDPIPE.
DON'T FIGHT IT. FIGHTING IT WILL ONLY BRING YOU SUFFERING--
KHAM
GHAA--!
I WARNED YOU--
VUMP
NOW I AM GOING TO LET YOU DIE SLOW, A PIECE AT A TIME, 'TIL YOU BEG FOR ME TO SLIT YOUR THROAT!

GHOSTMAKER--
SHANG-CHI!
AGAIN, I MUST FOREGO HONOR!
YE!!!!!
THUNCH
THE BEAST MARKS YOU FOR DEATH, GHOSTMAKER.
NO... THIS ISN'T HOW IT WAS PLANNED..

YAM
DISTRACTIONS LEAD TO DEFEAT, GHOSTMAKER!
THOK
Again, I am forced to take them on as a pair.
HUH HUH
There will be no honor in these kills--
But I will NOT fail!
SHZRAMSHZRAAMSHHZRAAMSHZRAM
ELEKTRA, I'M--
I KNOW.
BA
WHOOM
BWOOM
THOOM

YAKK
YAKK
ENOUGH OF THE FIREWORKS--
The fool. My arsenal does not END with my blasters--
HUH HUH HUUNGGHH...
--it BEGINS!
VOOM VOOM

YOU FIGHT WELL WITH YOUR SAI, ELEKTRA, BUT YOUR ONE IS NO MATCH FOR MY TWO--
GRAHHHHH!
THAT'S WHY I HAVE HER BACK--
WHUD
YOU FOOLS! YOU DON'T HAVE TO SACRIFICE YOURSELVES LIKE THIS.
LET ME HAVE SHANG-CHI, AND I WILL SPARE YOU!
YOU GO THROUGH US FIRST!
BLOOK

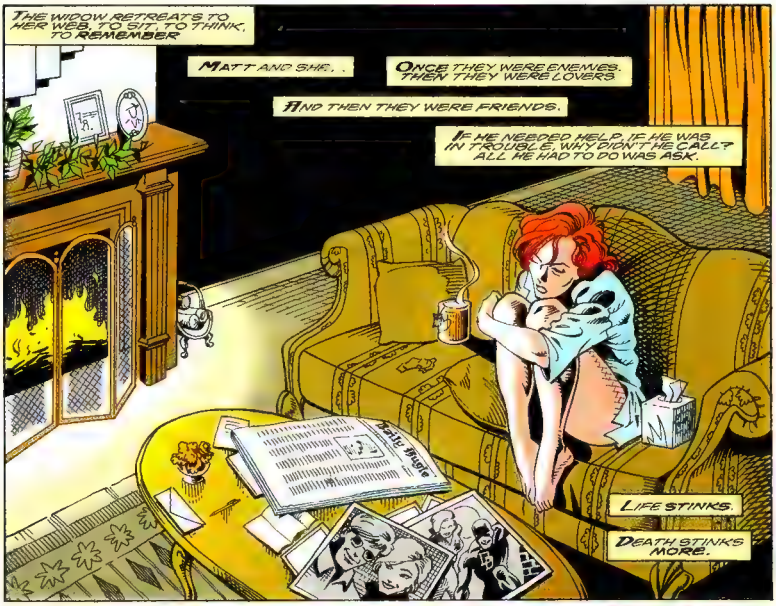
SO BE IT!
KLAK
HAHHHH!
ELEKTRA!
NO...
ERYNYS' SAI REPRESENTS THE RAGING DARKNESS WITHIN ELEKTRA'S SPIRIT.

KRAKT
IT IS AS IF IT WERE A CHANNEL FOR PURE EVIL --
--ALL FOCUSED THROUGH ONE OF THE WORLD'S DEADLIEST ASSASSINS.
REAARRRGGH!
NYAAAAAAAHHH...
AND THEN, AS SUDDENLY AS IT CAME, THE RAGE IS GONE--
--REPLACED WITH AN EERIE, INNER CALM...
SSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS

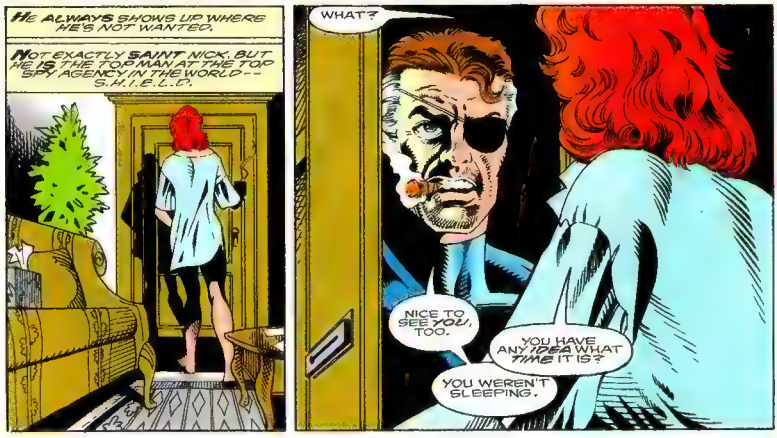
DO YOU STILL WISH TO ATTEMPT TO BRING ME BACK TO SHIELD?
YOU CAN'T HAVE HER.
THEY'LL USE HER FOR ALL THE NASTY JOBS THEY WON'T ADMIT TO.
LET IT BE, OR I'LL--
SAVE YOUR THREAT.
YOU COULD HAVE DIED FACING HIM LIKE THAT.
YOU COULD HAVE WALKED AWAY, AND LET US KILL EACH OTHER.
I OWE YOU A DEBT OF GRATITUDE FOR STAYING YOUR GROUND.
MUCH LIKE MI5, SHIELD HAS EYES EVERYWHERE. I ADVISE YOU TO STAY HIDDEN, ELEKTRA--
--OR SOMEONE WILL BE BACK.
MATT...
DON'T.
I JUST WATCHED YOU GO FROM A PSYCHOTIC KILLER TO A PEACEFUL SOUL IN THE SPAN OF AN INSTANT. I'M NOT SURE HOW TO READ THAT.
I'D LISTEN TO SHANG-CHI, IF I WERE YOU.
AND IF I FIND YOUR DARK SIDE IS BECOMING TOO OVERWHELMING, IT MIGHT BE ME WHO YOU'LL BE LOOKING OVER YOUR SHOULDER FOR.

WE ACTED IN HASTE, RELEASING GHOSTMAKER.
HE IS FORMIDABLE, BUT NOT YET READY TO SERVE.
HE MUST BE PURGED OF ALL DESIRE FOR PERSONAL VENGEANCE BEFORE BEING GIVEN ANOTHER CHANCE.
THE ALTERNATIVE IS TO DESTROY HIM FOREVER.
you should have left me dead, Daito.
I'll be ready to serve, and your head on a platter is what will result.
END.

"AND AS HE TELLS THE FACTS AS HE KNOWS THEM, BEN URICH IMAGINES THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO'LL READ HIS WORDS THE NEXT DAY..."
Daily Bugle
MATTHEW MURDOCK DE
PROMINENT HELL'S KITCHEN ATTOR
BODY FOUND IN SUBWAY
SOME WILL READ BEN URICH'S COLUMN WITH MORBID CURIOSITY.
SOME WILL READ THE HEADLINE WITH THE RESIGNED CALLOUSNESS OF THE NATIVE NEW YORKER— ANOTHER MURDER, ANOTHER DAY IN THE BIG APPLE.
SOME WILL SHRUG THEIR SHOULDERS AND TURN THEIR ATTENTION TO THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS.
SOME WILL READ IT IN ANGER, AND SOME WILL READ IT WITH TEARS.
DEAD END
NATASHA ROMANOVA READS IT OVER AND OVER AGAIN.
Daily Bugle
ENGLISH IS NOT HER NATIVE LANGUAGE.
PERHAPS THAT IS WHY THE WORDS SEEM TO MAKE NO SENSE.


THE WIDOW RETREATS TO HER WEB, TO SIT TO THINK, TO REMEMBER
MATT AND SHE. .
ONCE THEY WERE ENEMIES. THEN THEY WERE LOVERS.
AND THEN THEY WERE FRIENDS.
IF HE NEEDED HELP, IF HE WAS IN TROUBLE, WHY DIDN'T HE CALL? ALL HE HAD TO DO WAS ASK.
LIFE STINKS.
DEATH STINKS MORE.

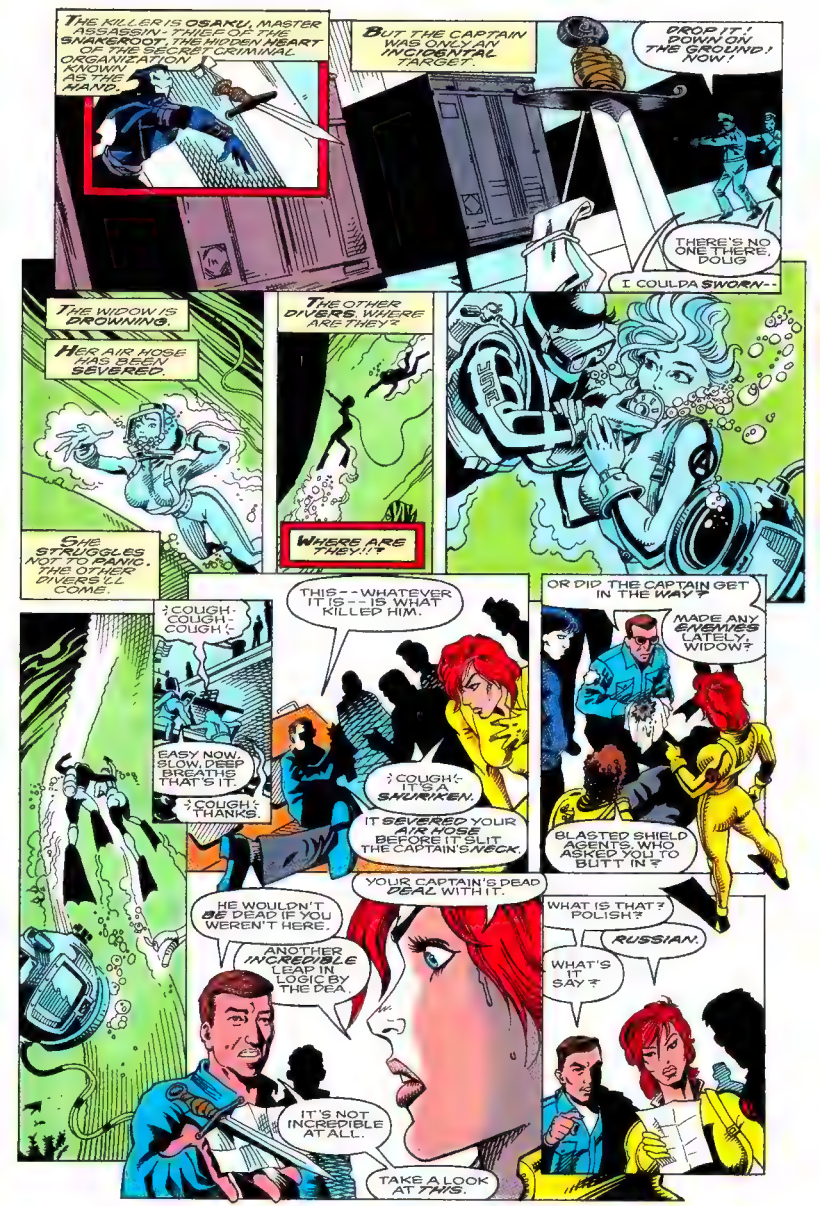
BZZZZZZT
THREE A.M.

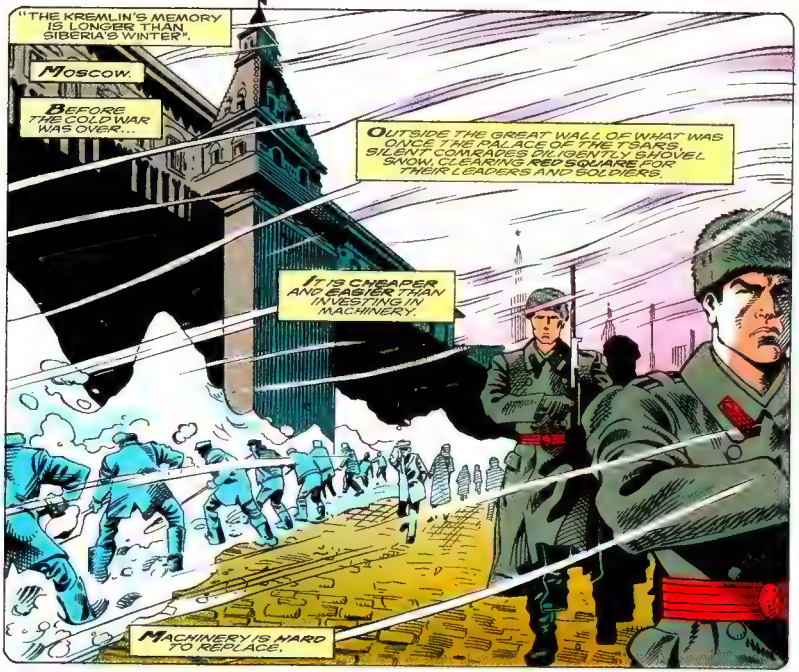

HE ALWAYS SHOWS UP WHERE HE'S NOT WANTED.
NOT EXACTLY SAINT NICK, BUT HE IS THE TOP MAN AT THE TOP SPY AGENCY IN THE WORLD -- S.H.I.E.L.D.
WHAT?
NICE TO SEE YOU, TOO.
YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT TIME IT IS?
YOU WEREN'T SLEEPING.

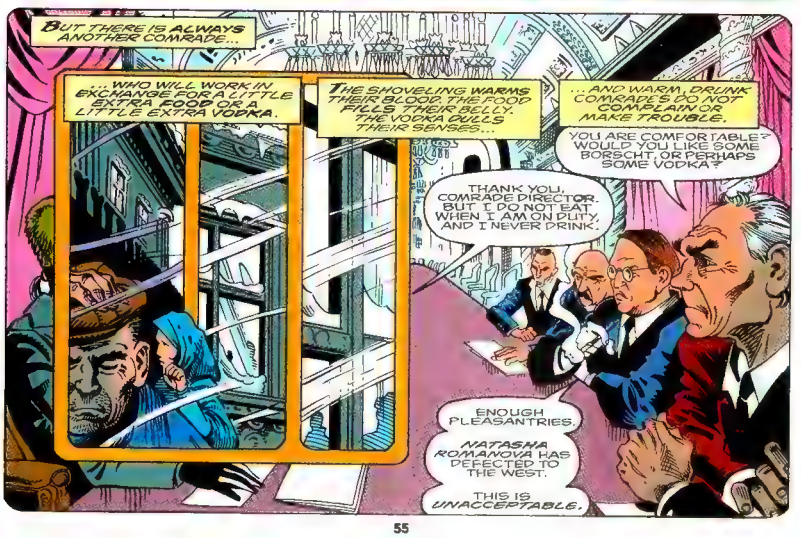
MAN, IT'S NASTY OUT THERE. MIND IF I WARM MY BONES?
PLACE LOOKS GOOD, TASHA. THAT A NEW PICTURE? I LIKE IT.
HOW 'BOUT A CUP OF JAVA TO GO WITH THE FIRE?
NO.
HOSTESS WITH THE MOSTEST. DON'T YOU EVER GET TIRED OF THAT "STOIC RUSKY" ROUTINE, COMRADE? THE COLD WAR'S OVER, Y'KNOW. OR SO THEY TOLD ME.
TOO BAD THEY FORGOT TO MENTION IT TO MURDOCK.
YEAH, POOR SLOB GOT IN OVER HIS HEAD.
YOU KNOW WHO KILLED HIM.
NOT WHO. MAYBE WHY.
EVER HEAR OF PROJECT: ABOUT FACE?
NO.
BIOLOGICAL WARFARE PROJECT.
SOME DR. FREUDENSTEIN DEVELOPED A VIRUS BASED ON PSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY. AFTER INFECTION TAKES PLACE, THE VICTIM'S EXISTING DNA IS REPLACED WITH A NEW MATRIX.
WHICH MEANS?
A NEW PERSONALITY ERASES THE OLD. A PRE-PROGRAMMED PERSONALITY.
GOD. VIRAL BRAIN-WASHING.
THE PENTAGON WAS IN HEAVEN. EVERY GENERAL'S WET DREAM--
THE WORLD ACCORDING TO THEM.
WHERE DOES MATT COME INTO THE PICTURE?
A VIAL OF THE VIRUS GOT LOST SOMEWHERE IN THE CITY'S SUBWAY NETWORK.
A LOT OF PEOPLE WANTED IT, INCLUDING PEOPLE WHO DIDN'T LIKE MATT MUCH.
MAYBE THEY THOUGHT A DO-GOODER LAWYER WAS A THREAT. MAYBE THEY DIDN'T LIKE HIS POLITICS. MAYBE THEY DIDN'T LIKE HIS CONNECTIONS TO CERTAIN SUPER HERO TYPES.
OR MAYBE HE JUST GOT ON THE WRONG SUBWAY. HE WAS BLIND.
NO.
NOT MATT.

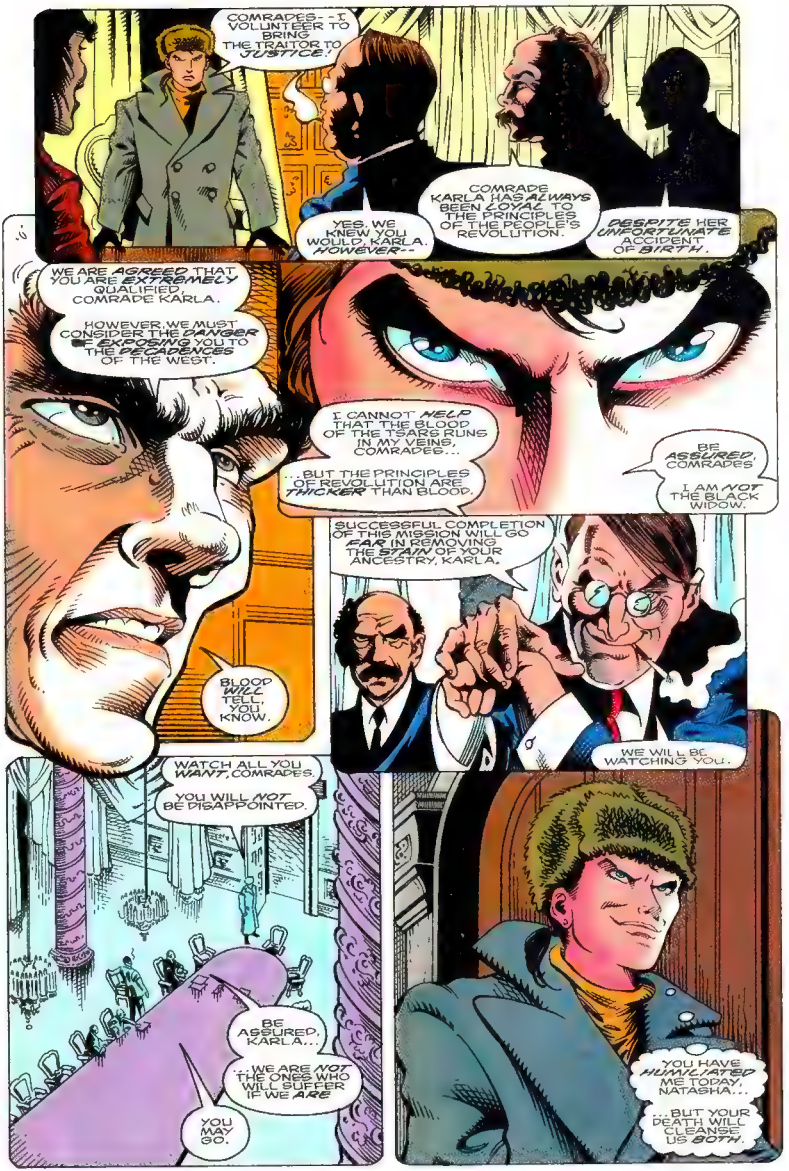
FURY HAD KNOWN EXACTLY WHICH BUTTONS TO PUSH.
LIBERIA
TWENTY-FOUR HOURS LATER, THE BLACK WIDOW IS IN PORT NEWARK, N.J., JOINING A DEA SCUBA TEAM DURING A ROUTINE HULL INSPECTION.
MATT HAD MADE MORE ENEMIES THAN FRIENDS IN HIS VIOLENT, BUT DISTINGUISHED CAREER. PEOPLE WHOSE BANK ACCOUNTS SMELLED WORSE THAN THEIR ARMPITS. PEOPLE WHOSE SOULS WERE COLDER THAN THE SNOW THEY SOLD ON THE STREET.
PEOPLE WHO WOULD DARE TO SELL THE DEVIL HIMSELF--
--FOR A VIRUS CAPABLE OF PRODUCING A CITY, A NATION, OF STRUNG-OUT JUNKIES.
I WANT YOU STAYIN' CLOSE TO THE OTHER DIVERS, FOLLOWIN' THEIR LEAD. I DON'T NEED NO TROUBLE FROM SHIELD IF YOU GET HURT.
I GOT ENOUGH TROUBLES OF MY OWN.
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE ON THE SAME SIDE HERE.
YEAH. RIGHT. AND WHO GETS THE COLLAR ON THIS ONE'T UST
OR SHIELD?
I DON'T KNOW AND I DON'T CARE. I'M HERE TO DO A JOB AND SO ARE YOU.
LET'S GET STARTED.
IDIOT.
IF IT WASN'T FOR MATT, MAYBE SHE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SO QUICK TO TAKE THE ASSIGNMENT.
INSTEAD, SHE HAS JUMPED INTO THE CUCUMBER OF NEWARK BAY.
IT'S DARK AND DIRTY DOWN THERE.
...BUT NO DIRTIER THAN ANYWHERE ELSE.

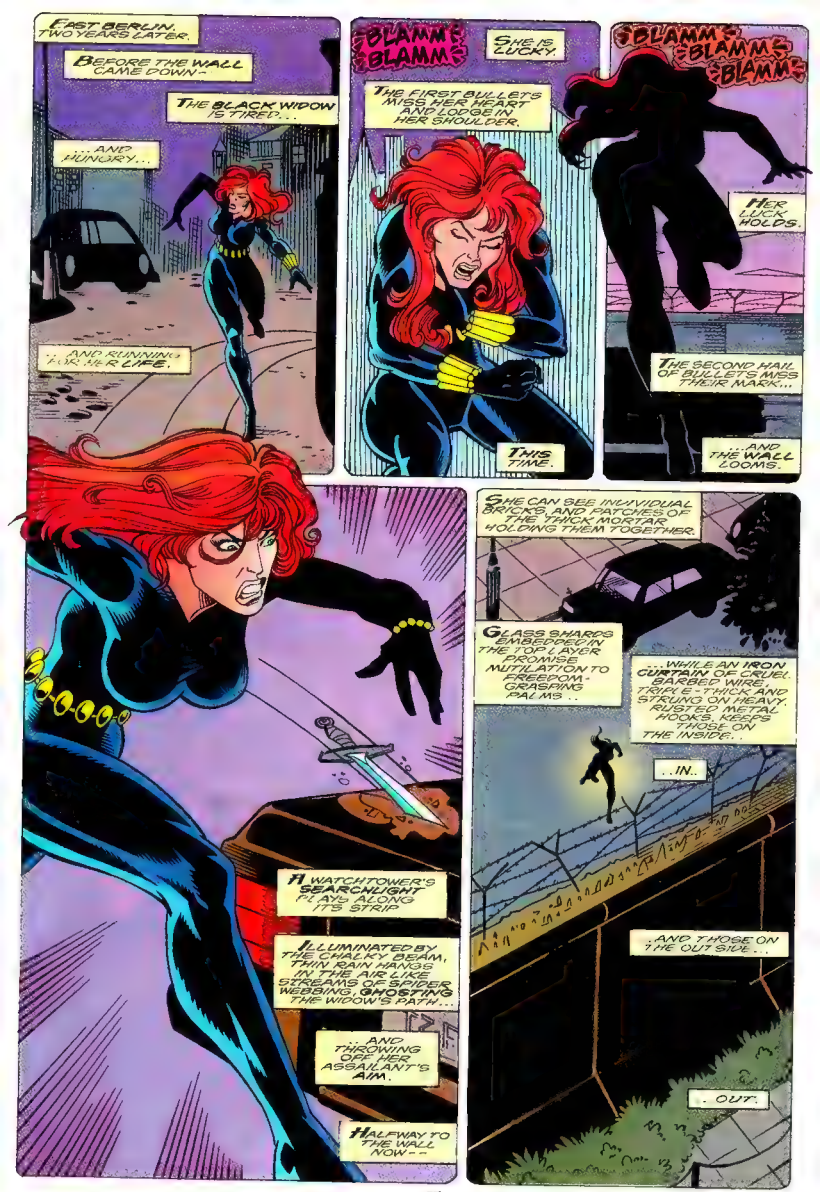
THE HUGE FREIGHTER'S HULL BULGES OVER THE WIDOW LIKE A PREGNANT WOMAN'S BELLY SWOLLEN WITH LIFE...
...BUT CARRYING DEATH BENEATH ITS SKIN.
YOU SEE THIS, CAPTAIN?
OPIUM
CLEAR AS CRYST--
--ALrrrgghhh!
SNIFF
SNIFF
CAPTAIN--?
SNIFF
;erggghk
CAPTAIN--!!
MEDIC!
GET SOME PRESSURE ON THAT NECK!
CODE BLUE! CALL FOR BACK-UP!
HE'S HAD IT!
SHUT UP! SIGNAL ABORT! MOVE!


THE KILLER IS OSAKU, MASTER ASSASSIN - THIEF OF THE SNAKEROOT, THE HIDDEN HEART OF THE SECRET CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION KNOWN AS THE HAND.
BUT THE CAPTAIN WAS ONLY AN INCIDENTAL TARGET.
DROP IT! DOWN ON THE GROUND! NOW!
THERE'S NO ONE THERE, DOLIG
I COULDA SWORN--
THE WIDOW IS DROWNING.
HER AIR HOSE HAS BEEN SEVERED.
SHE STRUGGLES NOT TO PANIC. THE OTHER DIVERS'LL COME.
THE OTHER DIVERS, WHERE ARE THEY?
WHERE ARE THEY!!?
;COUGH-COUGH-COUGH;-
EASY NOW, SLOW, DEEP BREATHS THAT'S IT.
;COUGH;- THANKS.
THIS -- WHATEVER IT IS -- IS WHAT KILLED HIM.
;COUGH;- IT'S A SHURIKEN.
IT SEVERED YOUR AIR HOSE BEFORE IT SLIT THE CAPTAIN'S NECK.
OR DID THE CAPTAIN GET IN THE WAY?
MADE ANY ENEMIES LATELY, WIDOW?
BLASTED SHIELD AGENTS, WHO ASKED YOU TO BUTT IN?
YOUR CAPTAIN'S DEAD PEARL WITH IT.
HE WOULDN'T BE DEAD IF YOU WEREN'T HERE.
ANOTHER INCREDIBLE LEAP IN LOGIC BY THE DEA.
IT'S NOT INCREDIBLE AT ALL.
TAKE A LOOK AT THIS.
WHAT IS THAT? POLISH?
RUSSIAN.
WHAT'S IT SAY?

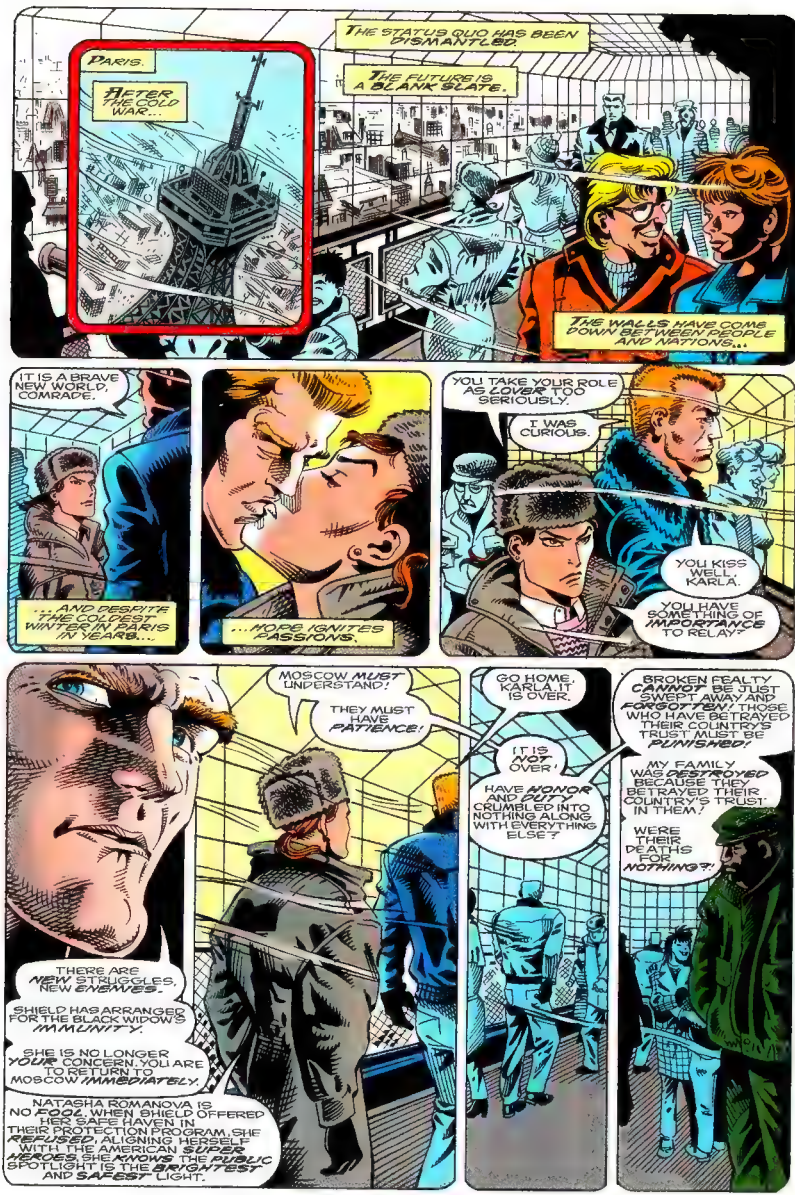

"THE KREMLIN'S MEMORY IS LONGER THAN SIBERIA'S WINTER".
MOSCOW.
BEFORE THE COLD WAR WAS OVER...
OUTSIDE THE GREAT WALL OF WHAT WAS ONCE THE PALACE OF THE TSARS, SILENT COMRADES DILIGENTLY SHOVEL SNOW, CLEARING RED SQUARE FOR THEIR LEADERS AND SOLDIERS.
IT IS CHEAPER AND EASIER THAN INVESTING IN MACHINERY.
MACHINERY IS HARD TO REPLACE.

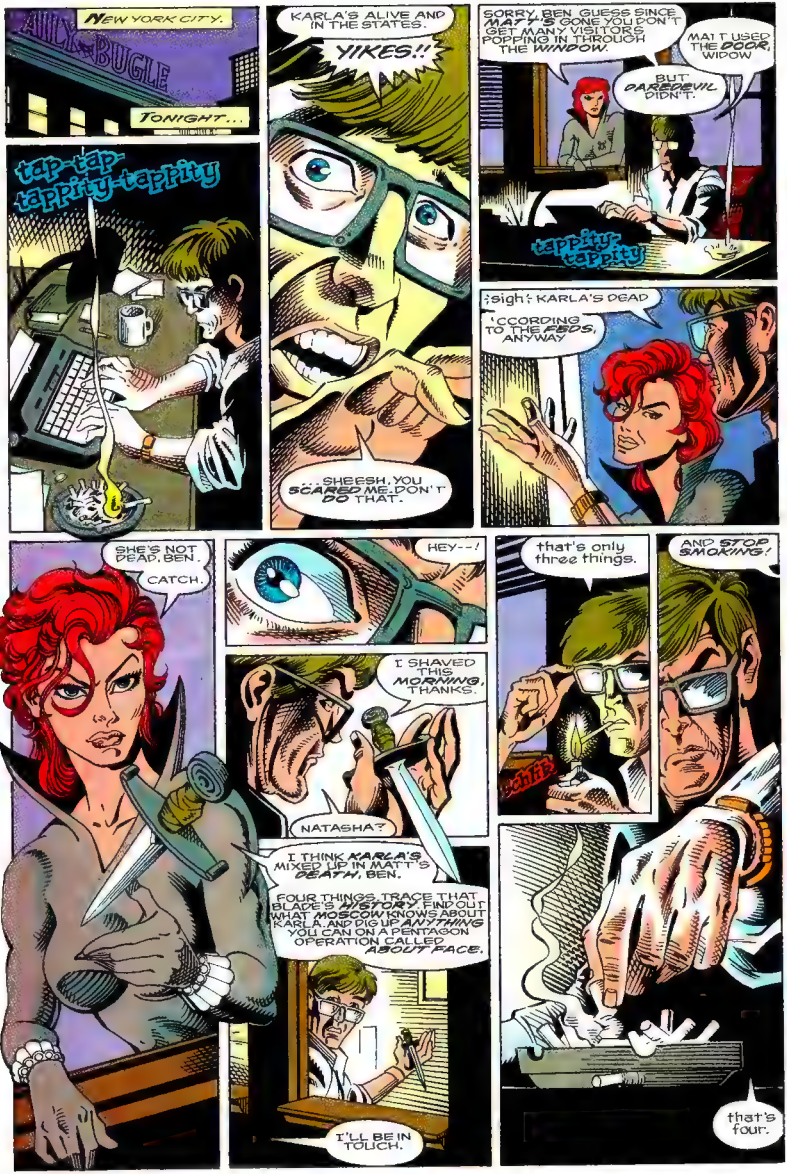

BUT THERE IS ALWAYS ANOTHER COMRADE...
...WHO WILL WORK IN EXCHANGE FOR A LITTLE EXTRA FOOD OR A LITTLE EXTRA VODKA.
THE SHOVELING WARMS THEIR BLOOD. THE FOOD FILLS THEIR BELLY. THE VODKA DULLS THEIR SENSES...
...AND WARM, DRUNK COMRADES DO NOT COMPLAIN OR MAKE TROUBLE.
YOU ARE COMFORTABLE? WOULD YOU LIKE SOME BORSCHT, OR PERHAPS SOME VODKA?
THANK YOU, COMRADE DIRECTOR. BUT I DO NOT EAT WHEN I AM ON DUTY, AND I NEVER DRINK.
ENOUGH PLEASANTRIES.
NATASHA ROMANOVA HAS DEFECTED TO THE WEST.
THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE.

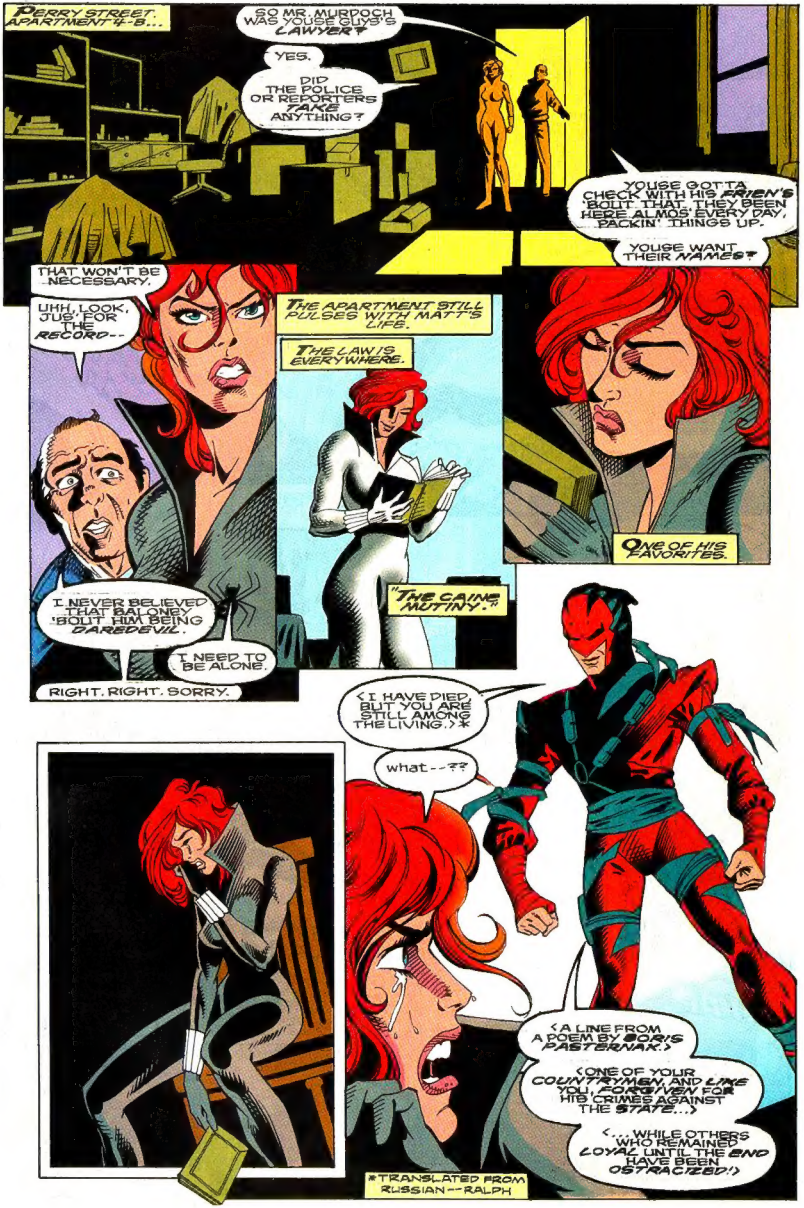

COMRADES--I VOLUNTEER TO BRING THE TRAITOR TO JUSTICE!
COMRADE KARLA HAS ALWAYS BEEN LOYAL TO THE PRINCIPLES OF THE PEOPLE'S REVOLUTION.
YES. WE KNEW YOU WOULD, KARLA. HOWEVER--
DESPITE HER UNFORTUNATE ACCIDENT OF BIRTH.
WE ARE AGREED THAT YOU ARE EXTREMELY QUALIFIED, COMRADE KARLA.
HOWEVER, WE MUST CONSIDER THE DANGER OF EXPOSING YOU TO THE DECADENCES OF THE WEST.
I CANNOT HELP THAT THE BLOOD OF THE TSARS RUNS IN MY VEINS, COMRADES...
...BUT THE PRINCIPLES OF REVOLUTION ARE THICKER THAN BLOOD.
BE ASSURED, COMRADES
I AM NOT THE BLACK WIDOW.
BLOOD WILL TELL, YOU KNOW.
SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THIS MISSION WILL GO FAR IN REMOVING THE STAIN OF YOUR ANCESTRY, KARLA.
WE WILL BE WATCHING YOU.
WATCH ALL YOU WANT, COMRADES.
YOU WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.
BE ASSURED, KARLA...
...WE ARE NOT THE ONES WHO WILL SUFFER IF WE ARE
YOU MAY GO.
YOU HAVE HUMILIATED ME TODAY, NATASHA...
...BUT YOUR DEATH WILL CLEANSE US BOTH.


EAST BERLIN. TWO YEARS LATER.
BEFORE THE WALL CAME DOWN—
THE BLACK WIDOW IS TIRED...
...AND HUNGRY...
...AND RUNNING FOR HER LIFE.
BLAMM! BLAMM!
SHE IS LUCKY.
THE FIRST BULLETS MISS HER HEART AND LODGE IN HER SHOULDER.
THIS TIME.
BLAMM! BLAMM! BLAMM!
HER LUCK HOLDS.
THE SECOND HAIL OF BULLETS MISS THEIR MARK...
AND THE WALL LOOMS.
SHE CAN SEE INDIVIDUAL BRICKS, AND PATCHES OF THE THICK MORTAR HOLDING THEM TOGETHER.
GLASS SHARDS EMBEDDED IN THE TOP LAYER PROMISE MUTILATION TO FREEDOM-GRASPING PALMS.
...WHILE AN IRON CURTAIN OF CRUEL, BARBED WIRE, TRIPLE-THICK AND STRUNG ON HEAVY, RUSTED METAL HOOKS, KEEPS THOSE ON THE INSIDE.
...IN...
...AND THOSE ON THE OUT SIDE...
...OUT.
A WATCHTOWER'S SEARCHLIGHT PLAYS ALONG ITS STRIP.
ILLUMINATED BY THE CHALKY BEAM, THIN RAIN HANGS IN THE AIR LIKE STREAMS OF SPIDER-WEBBING, GHOSTING THE WIDOW'S PATH...
AND THROWING OFF HER ASSAILANT'S AIM.
HALFWAY TO THE WALL NOW—

SHE REACHES THE WALL.
SHE IS EXHAUSTED.
SHE CLIMBS.
THE WICKED ANGLES OF RAGGED GLASS TEAR THROUGH THE WIDOW'S GLOVES, LACERATING HER PALMS.
THE THREADS OF RUSTING WIRE BECOME ENTANGLED WITH THE LONG WEBFILS OF HER HAIR, RIPPING IT OUT BY ITS ROOTS.
THE BLACK WIDOW IS CAUGHT, A FLY IN A SPIDER'S WEB...
...AND HER LUCK HAS RUN OUT.
SO, NATASHA, IT FINALLY ENDS.
TWO YEARS IS A LONG TIME TO SUFFER BIRTH PANGS.
BUT NOW, THE TRAITOR DIES, AND YOU WILL BE REBORN A HERO.
WITH A PARADE, PERHAPS, IN RED SQUARE?
THE WORLD HAS A SHORT MEMORY, KARLA. TODAY'S HERO IS YESTERDAY'S HEADLINE. GOOD ONLY FOR LINING THE GARBAGE.
I'LL TELL YOU WHAT YOUR REBIRTH WILL BRING YOU, TOVARISCH. A PAT ON THE SHOULDER PERHAPS, FROM THE DIRECTOR. OR, IF YOU'RE LUCKY, A BIT OF CAVIAR.
WILL THAT BE ENOUGH FOR THE GREAT-GREAT GRANDNIECE OF THE TSAR?
SHUT UP!!!
DOESN'T YOUR ARISTOCRATIC BLOOD SCREAM FOR MORE BOURGEOIS APPRECIATION?
DIAMONDS. FURS. A ROLLS-ROYCE?
SHUT UP AND JUMP, NATASHA!
IT'S NOT OVER, WIDOW!
WHAT WERE YOU DOING?
BUYING TIME.
WHERE WERE YOU?
it's not over.

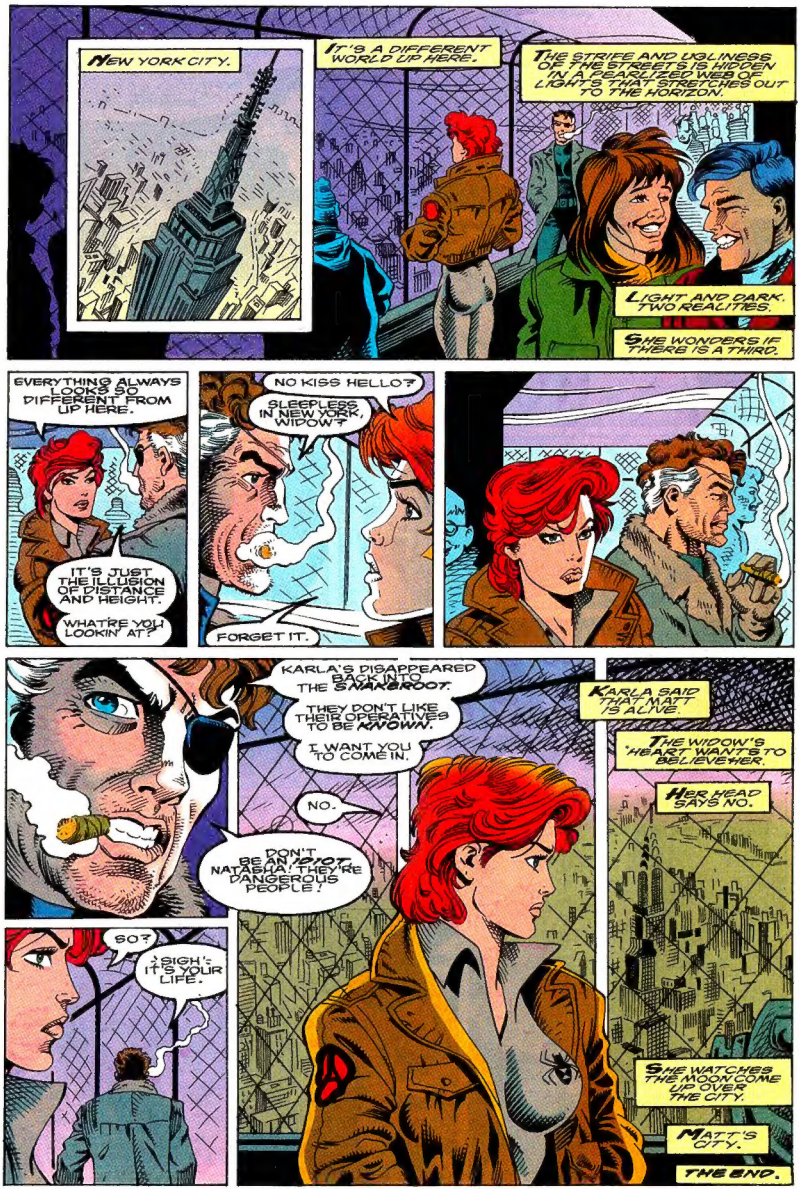

PARIS.
AFTER THE COLD WAR...
THE STATUS QUO HAS BEEN DISMANTLED.
THE FUTURE IS A BLANK SLATE.
THE WALLS HAVE COME DOWN BETWEEN PEOPLE AND NATIONS...
IT IS A BRAVE NEW WORLD, COMRADE.
...AND DESPITE THE COLDEST WINTER IN PARIS IN YEARS...
...HOPE IGNITES PASSIONS.
YOU TAKE YOUR ROLE AS LOVER TOO SERIOUSLY.
I WAS CURIOUS.
YOU KISS WELL, KARLA.
YOU HAVE SOMETHING OF IMPORTANCE TO RELAY?
MOSCOW MUST UNDERSTAND!
THEY MUST HAVE PATIENCE!
THERE ARE NEW STRUGGLES. NEW ENEMIES.
SHIELD HAS ARRANGED FOR THE BLACK WIDOW'S IMMUNITY.
SHE IS NO LONGER YOUR CONCERN. YOU ARE TO RETURN TO MOSCOW IMMEDIATELY.
NATASHA ROMANOVA IS NO FOOL. WHEN SHIELD OFFERED HER SAFE HAVEN IN THEIR PROTECTION PROGRAM, SHE REFUSED, ALIGNING HERSELF WITH THE AMERICAN SUPER HEROES. SHE KNOWS THE PUBLIC SPOTLIGHT IS THE BRIGHTEST AND SAFEST LIGHT.
GO HOME, KARLA. IT IS OVER.
IT IS NOT OVER!
HAVE HONOR AND DUTY CRUMBLED INTO NOTHING ALONG WITH EVERYTHING ELSE?
BROKEN FEALTY CANNOT BE JUST SWEPT AWAY AND FORGOTTEN! THOSE WHO HAVE BETRAYED THEIR COUNTRY'S TRUST MUST BE PUNISHED!
MY FAMILY WAS DESTROYED BECAUSE THEY BETRAYED THEIR COUNTRY'S TRUST IN THEM.
WERE THEIR DEATHS FOR NOTHING?!


NEW YORK CITY.
DAILY BUGLE
TONIGHT...
tap-tap-tappity-tappity
KARLA'S ALIVE AND IN THE STATES.
YIKES!!
...SHEESH. YOU SCARED ME. DON'T DO THAT.
SORRY, BEN. GUESS SINCE MATT'S GONE YOU DON'T GET MANY VISITORS POPPING IN THROUGH THE WINDOW.
MATT USED THE DOOR, WIDOW
BUT DAREDEVIL DIDN'T.
tappity-tappity
;sigh; KARLA'S DEAD
'CCORDING TO THE FEDS, ANYWAY
SHE'S NOT DEAD, BEN.
CATCH.
HEY--!
I SHAVED THIS MORNING, THANKS.
NATASHA?
I THINK KARLA'S MIXED UP IN MATT'S DEATH, BEN.
FOUR THINGS TRACE THAT BLADE'S HISTORY. FIND OUT WHAT MOSCOW KNOWS ABOUT KARLA, AND DIG UP ANYTHING YOU CAN ON A PENTAGON OPERATION CALLED ABOUT FACE.
I'LL BE IN TOUCH.
that's only three things.
AND STOP SMOKING!
that's four.


PERRY STREET. APARTMENT 4-B...
SO MR. MURDOCH WAS YOUSE GUYS'S LAWYER?
YES.
DID THE POLICE OR REPORTERS TAKE ANYTHING?
YOUSE GOTTA CHECK WITH HIS FRIEN'S 'BOUT THAT. THEY BEEN HERE ALMOS' EVERY DAY, PACKIN' THINGS UP.
YOUSE WANT THEIR NAMES?
THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY.
UHH, LOOK, JUS' FOR THE RECORD--
I NEVER BELIEVED THAT BALONEY 'BOUT HIM BEING DAREDEVIL.
I NEED TO BE ALONE.
RIGHT. RIGHT. SORRY.
THE APARTMENT STILL PULSES WITH MATT'S LIFE.
THE LAW IS EVERYWHERE.
"THE CAINE MUTINY."
ONE OF HIS FAVORITES.
<I HAVE DIED BUT YOU ARE STILL AMONG THE LIVING.>*
what--??
<A LINE FROM A POEM BY BORIS PASTERNAX.>
<ONE OF YOUR COUNTRYMEN AND LIKE YOU, FORGIVEN FOR HIS CRIMES AGAINST THE STATE...>
<...WHILE OTHERS WHO REMAINED LOYAL UNTIL THE END HAVE BEEN OSTRACIZED!>
*TRANSLATED FROM RUSSIAN--RALPH

KRAKKK
uhhhh
BRAKKSH
MANY HAVE PAID FOR CRIMES OF WHICH THEY WERE INNOCENT, NATASHA.
NO ONE ESCAPES PAYMENT, KARLA. NOT ME...
SWAT
NOT YOU!
NYET!
NOW IT IS TIME FOR THE GUILTY TO BE PUNISHED!
grumph
THWAKK
SHAP
OOF
THUD
BRAKKK
I WILL KILL YOU!
SKAKK
THRASSH
ENOUGH!!!

DO YOU THINK IT WAS EASY FOR ME TO PERFECT?
I WANTED TO STAY! I WANTED TO CONTINUE TO BELIEVE IN THE DREAM!
BUT WE WERE LED BY POWER-HUNGRY MEN WHO SPOKE OF THE UTOPIA OF A PEOPLE'S STATE BUT WHO ACTED ONLY OUT OF LUST FOR POWER AND INDIVIDUAL RULE!
BUT AFTER I PERFECTED, I DISCOVERED THAT THOSE MEN ARE EVERYWHERE.
THWAKK
THERE ARE TWO WORLDS, KARLA. THE FIRST ONE IS OF SHADOWS AND LIES AND SECRET GOVERNMENT AGENDAS.
THE OTHER IS THE WORLD WE SHAPE OURSELVES. LIGHT OR DARK, IT IS UP TO US.
NOW STOP STRUGGLING OR I WILL BE FORCED TO CRUSH YOUR WINDPIPE!
POLICE! FREEZE!
SLAMM
FWAPP
UHHH
YOUR WORLD IS NOT MINE, POVARISCH!
SMASSHH
BLAMM
BLAMMM
BLAMMM
SHE'S OUTTA HERE.
PUT OUT AN APB.
DON'T WASTE THE MANPOWER
YOU WON'T FIND HER.


NEW YORK CITY.
IT'S A DIFFERENT WORLD UP HERE.
THE STRIFE AND UGLINESS OF THE STREETS IS HIDDEN IN A PEARL-LED WEB OF LIGHTS THAT STRETCHES OUT TO THE HORIZON.
LIGHT AND DARK. TWO REALITIES.
SHE WONDERS IF THERE IS A THIRD.
EVERYTHING ALWAYS LOOKS SO DIFFERENT FROM UP HERE.
IT'S JUST THE ILLUSION OF DISTANCE AND HEIGHT.
WHAT'RE YOU LOOKIN' AT?
NO KISS HELLO?
SLEEPLESS IN NEW YORK, WIDOW?
FORGET IT.
KARLA'S DISAPPEARED BACK INTO THE SAVAGEBOOT.
THEY DON'T LIKE THEIR OPERATIVES TO BE KNOWN.
I WANT YOU TO COME IN.
NO.
DON'T BE AN IDIOT, NATASHA! THEY'RE DANGEROUS PEOPLE!
SO?
SIGH. IT'S YOUR LIFE.
KARLA SAID THAT MATT IS ALIVE.
THE WIDOW'S HEART WANTS TO BELIEVE HER.
HER HEAD SAYS NO.
SHE WATCHES THE MOON COME UP OVER THE CITY.
MATT'S CITY.
THE END.